

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Water Quality Planning

-D-R-A-F-T-

Proposed Revisions To Ambient Water Quality pH Beneficial Use Standards

FACT SHEET

August, 2002

Background

Section 303 of the Clean Water Act and 40 CFR 131 give states responsibility for setting, reviewing and revising water quality standards. Water quality standards include criteria that provide limits on a particular pollutant or limits on a condition of a waterbody designed to protect and support a designated use. Under Section 304(a) of the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes and periodically updates water quality criteria reflecting the latest scientific data and information on the environmental effects of pollutants. The revised criteria are used by states to modify water quality standards that provide for the protection and propagation of aquatic life and wildlife; for recreation in and on the water; public water supplies; and agricultural and industrial uses. State of Nevada requirements for water quality standards are contained in the Nevada Revised Statutes 445A.425 and 445A.565 and water quality standards for waters of Nevada are found in the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 445A.119 through 445A.225.

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) is proposing a revision of the existing pH criteria for various waterbodies throughout the state. The proposed criteria are based upon EPA recommendations for protection of the designated uses of the waterbody. When the water quality standards for Nevada waterbodies were originally developed, the pH standards recommended by the EPA in the Blue Book Water Quality Criteria (1972) were used. The recommended pH levels were 7.0 to 8.3 standard units (SU) for protection of wildlife and water contact recreation, and 7.0 to 9.0 for protection of wildlife and aquatic life. EPA's most recent national guidance criteria, the Gold Book Quality Criteria for Water (1986), recommends a pH range of 6.5 to 9.0 for protection and propagation of aquatic life and wildlife, and for recreation in and on the water.

The proposed revisions are summarized below.

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b>Existing pH Standard</b>	<b>Proposed pH Standard</b>
Carson River (at Lahontan Dam)	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Chiatovich Creek	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Indian Creek	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Leidy Creek	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Virgin River System	7.0 to 9.0	6.5 to 9.0
Beaver Dam Wash	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Snake Creek	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Colorado River System	7.0 to 8.3	6.5 to 9.0
Muddy River System	7.0 to 9.0	6.5 to 9.0
Meadow Valley Wash	7.0 to 9.0	6.5 to 9.0

During previous reviews and assessment of water quality standards for the Truckee, Carson (except for Lahontan Dam), Humboldt, Walker, and Snake River basins, and Las Vegas Wash and Lake Mead, the pH criteria of 6.5 to 9.0 was adopted in the water quality regulations for these waterbodies. At this time, NDEP is not proposing to modify the pH criteria in the Class Waters standards or in the Lake Tahoe and tributaries water quality standards. Appropriate changes to the pH water quality criteria for these waters will be made when the water quality standards for these waterbodies are reviewed in detail.

Additionally, no changes are proposed for the sections of rivers contained on tribal lands, which include the Walker River from the inlet to Walker Lake to Weber Reservoir, the Truckee River from the inlet to Pyramid Lake to the Wadsworth gage, and the East Fork Owyhee River at the Nevada-Idaho stateline. Pursuant to the 1987 Amendments to the Clean Water Act, authorized tribes rather than states have authority for setting water quality standards and implementing regulations for waters on tribal lands.

Workshops are held to obtain comments on proposed revisions to water quality standards from federal, state and local agencies and the general public. After consideration of the public comments, the proposed standards are presented at a public hearing to the State Environmental Commission (SEC) for review and adoption. Standards adopted by the SEC are then subject to approval by the USEPA.

Public Workshops:

Tuesday, August 27, 2002  
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection  
123 W. Nye Lane  
Carson City, NV 89701  
Conference Room 217  
6:00 to 8:00 pm

Thursday, August 29, 2002  
Elko Convention Center  
700 Moren Way  
Elko, NV 89801  
6:00 to 8:00 pm

Wednesday, September 4, 2002  
Las Vegas Water District  
1001 South Valley View  
Las Vegas, NV 89107  
Mead Conference Room  
6:00 to 8:00 pm

For questions, comments or additional information  
please contact:

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